



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Mississippi
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CCDF
Newsletter

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This newsletter will provide biweekly updates as the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan is being implemented.

Has Mississippi's CCDF plan been approved?

Yes. The state submitted its CCDF plan for the period of June 1, 2016, through September 30, 2018, and the plan has been conditionally approved by the federal Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care. Conditionally approved means the CCDF plan is fully approved with the expectation that the implementation sections of the plan will be carried out by the lead agency, Mississippi Department of Human Services, within a federally specified timeline. The CCDF was reauthorized by the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014.

Who's on the CCDF team?

In January, Governor Phil Bryant appointed John Davis as executive director of the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS). Davis has 24 years of experience in human services on local, regional, and state levels. This spring, Cathy Sykes was named director of the Division of Early Childhood Care and Development (DECCD) within MDHS. DECCD has direct oversight over the Child Care Payment Program (CCPP), which is funded by the CCDF. In addition, the State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC), chaired by Ricky Boggan, will work through its existing governance structure to help MDHS coordinate and collaborate with early childhood stakeholders, particularly child care providers, on CCDF plan implementation and CCPP policy revisions. Collaboration with other state agencies is also critical for successful implementation of the CCDF plan. For example, the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) works in sync with MDHS on a variety of child care licensing and policy matters. Lastly, due to the new federal requirements in the CCDBG Act of 2014 for CCDF usage, MDHS is currently working with NSPARC to provide technical assistance in updating its CCPP policy manual. The CCDF team's goal is to provide innovative solutions and raise state expectations to better serve Mississippi children and families. Please join the team and let your voice be heard during this process.



Cutline: The CCDF technical team met to incorporate stakeholder and provider feedback and new federal guidelines into the revised MDHS CCPP policy manual that will be submitted to the Secretary of State's Office in early August.

What are the major provisions of the CCDBG Act of 2014 regarding the CCDF?

The first major provision of the proposed rule is to address the protection of children in childcare settings. This provision mandates that all providers take health and safety training in 10 fundamental topics. The provision also calls for comprehensive background checks of all childcare staff, unless a staff member is related to a child. The law requires providers (including those who are exempt from licensing) receiving CCDF funds to be monitored, at least annually, to determine if the federally mandated health and safety practices are being followed. In addition, providers will be asked to report child abuse and neglect, and MDHS will be responsible for establishing a reporting process for parental complaints. Incidents of serious injuries and death must be reported as well.

The second major provision is helping parents make informed consumer choices and giving them access to resources that support the development of their children. MDHS will work with partner agencies, child care providers, and others to establish a clearinghouse of information through an easy-to-use and easily accessible

consumer education website. Licensing information, background checks, monitoring, and quality reports will all be accessible online. Often times, parents may not know that they are eligible for other types of assistance, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Promoting parental involvement and providing families with better access to additional services and best practices in child development are important goals for states to accomplish going forward.



The third major provision is to provide equal access to stable, high-quality child care for low-income children. Congress is providing more stable financial child care assistance by extending a child's eligibility to a minimum of 12 months, regardless of increases in family earnings or changes in a parent's work, training, or education. The CCDBG Act of 2014 encourages stabilization in a parent's employment/education and in child care services. In turn, providers also benefit from a reliable payment of CCDF funds. This approach promotes continuity of care for children while allowing parents to get on a path to economic stability.

The CCDBG Act of 2014 also states that families receiving CCDF funding should have equal access to quality of care that non-CCDF families receive. Therefore, MDHS will set provider payment rates based on a valid Market Rate Survey (MRS). The CCDBG Act of 2014 requires MDHS to set the base payment rate at a level sufficient to cover the costs to providers of the health, safety, and quality requirements included in the new law. Having payment rates set at the 75th percentile of a recent MRS will be considered an important benchmark for proving "equal access" in the new childcare structure.

Lastly, the fourth major provision is to enhance the quality of child care and the early childhood workforce by steering investments toward infants, toddlers, poor and homeless children, children in need of nontraditional hour care, and children with special needs. MDHS will be required to submit an annual report to show progress of quality improvement in services for these populations. Implementing higher standards for programs and ongoing professional development for caregivers are strategies for improvement.

The CCDBG Act of 2014 recognizes CCDF as integral to promoting the healthy development of children in a state while also providing support for families to get on a path to financial stability. In developing policy to address the new federal requirements, we are striving to establish a better framework to provide a higher-quality child care system for all eligible Mississippi families.

What's next?

Three workgroups met in June to gather feedback from stakeholders to assist MDHS in fulfilling federal requirements.

An online comment form is available now to collect feedback at <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form?EQBCT=81f6199cf990413bb131f164f8f2adc0>.

MDHS submitted the revised CCPP policy manual to the Secretary of State's Office on August 2 and is following the Administrative Procedure Act process. The manual will be available for public comment through August 27, 2016.

A public hearing regarding the new manual is scheduled for Monday, August 22, at 5:30 p.m. in room 145 of the Woolfolk Building in Jackson, Mississippi.

For more information about the CCDF State Plan, visit <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/early-childhood-care-development/child-care-resources/ccdf-state-plan/>.

For questions or additional comments, please contact Cathy Sykes at Cathy.Sykes@mdhs.ms.gov.